

Case Study

Megan Cadd-Van Den Berg

From the Victorian Aboriginal
Child Care Agency on Cultural
Competency Training

Connections UnitingCare has engaged the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) to deliver training specifically tailored for staff working in the child, youth and family services sector. This cultural competency training is delivered to give staff an introductory understanding and appreciation of culturally respectful practices when engaging with Aboriginal children, families and workers.

Megan Cadd-Van Den Berg from VACCA recently delivered this training and answers a few questions about her experience with Connections.



MEGAN CADD-VAN DEN BERG. PHOTO BY NEWSPIX

What was your sense of Connections when you delivered training at our Head Office in Mount Waverley?

Most of my training is conducted at VACCA or within the Aboriginal community so it can be daunting to train offsite within a new mainstream organisation. When I arrived at Connections I was first greeted by the sign acknowledging the traditional owners of the land, a children's area with Aboriginal kid's puzzles and posters of diverse families. My first impression was that this is an organisation that is respectful of Aboriginal people and culture.

Can you tell us the importance of the working with Aboriginal children, families and workers training that you delivered?

It is very important for Connections staff to be involved in this training. First and foremost this is a cultural awareness training in which the group participate in a simulated activity that takes participants through the journey of colonisation. This activity changes people's perceptions of Aboriginal people and what they learnt in school about Australian history. The training overall provides a context, an overview of Aboriginal culture and tips and things to consider when engaging with Aboriginal children, families and workers.

Can you tell us how receptive the Connections staff were to the training that you delivered?

I trained around a 150 staff which varied from staff that hadn't been in Australia very long and having no knowledge about Australian history and Aboriginal culture to staff that had extensively worked with Aboriginal children and families. Overall the groups were very receptive and the staff who had extensively worked with Aboriginal children and families were invited to share their experiences and they added great value to the training. I was overall very impressed with the staff and their respect for me and Aboriginal people and culture.

Why is Connections interested in Cultural Competency Training?

Connections has a strong commitment to Aboriginal people and their community. We are actively working to develop culturally appropriate services that are guided by the Aboriginal community.

We are forging and building partnerships to ensure that we are improving our understanding, responsiveness and work with Aboriginal families.

Connections is actively improving cultural awareness and competencies at all levels of the organisation from the Board of Governance, Senior Management and all staff.

As part of this we have...

- » a commitment to mutual learning and professional development exchange with Aboriginal organisations,
- » a commitment to provide ongoing cultural awareness training to staff and incorporate cultural competence as a core underpinning in our policy development and strategic planning,
- » an aim to develop linkages, improve understanding and professional practice and provide a reciprocal learning exchange that provides leadership and modeling of collaborative partnership relationships.

To find out more about the organisations we are working with to ensure that we develop culturally appropriate services that are guided by the Aboriginal community or to find out more on our work in this area, please go to www.connections.org.au/indigenous

Connections UnitingCare is a community organisation with a long and proud history of supporting marginalised and disadvantaged people. We offer a range of services across a continuum of care from preschool and childcare through to counselling and in-home support. We provide innovative and early intervention programs that support children, young people and their families giving them a better chance in life now and in the future.

For more information visit www.connections.org.au